

# The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

Vol. 22, No. 50

TORONTO, APRIL 13, 1944

Whole Number 1143

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## How the Catholic Church Helped Hitler to Power

(See Important Note on This Article on Page 6.)

By J. J. MURPHY

**FACTUAL PROOF** of the part played by the Vatican in the establishment of the Hitler dictatorship abounds in the past issues of THE CONVERTED CATHOLIC MAGAZINE since its beginning in January 1940. Within the limits of nine pages Dr. Murphy has given below a synthesis of these documented facts. Moreover, he has correlated them with outstanding books on the subject, especially with 'Der Fuehrer,' a book just released from the press. Of its author, Konrad Heiden, Dorothy Thompson, an authority on Germany, says: "He probably knows more about Hitler and the rise of National Socialism than any objective historian alive."

**POPE LEO XIII** in his encyclical *Libertas Humana* declares: "It is entirely unlawful to demand, to defend or to grant unconditional freedom of thought, of speech, of writing, or of worship." His predecessor, Pius IX, condemned in the encyclical *Quanta Cura* the proposition that, "The Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself and agree with progress, liberalism and modern culture."

The essential opposition of the papacy to the individual liberties that resulted from the French Revolution has been uppermost in the minds of recent popes, as the above condemnations indicate. So too has been their failure to cope with them. It was natural then that they should seek to join forces with the reactionary monarchs and militarists of Europe. The most promising of these was Kaiser Wilhelm II, who, like Hitler in years to come, had drunk deeply of the fascist nationalism of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. The thought naturally occurred to Pope Leo XIII that, in conjunction with the Kaiser, he might be able to re-establish the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation in which the Roman Pontiff and the German emperor would share again dominion over all Europe. This is what Leo XIII had in mind when he

made the following proposal to Kaiser Wilhelm II, which is recorded by the Kaiser himself in his autobiography:

"It was of interest to me that the Pope said to me on this occasion that *Germany must become the sword of the Catholic Church*. I remarked that the old Roman Empire of the German nation no longer existed and that conditions had changed. But he stuck to his words."

The co-operation of the Vatican with Kaiser Wilhelm in World War I and the text of the secret German-Vatican treaty are revealed in the autobiography of Mathias Erzberger, leader of the Catholic Center Party in Germany and head of the German propaganda office at that time. The open intervention of Pope Benedict XV in favour of Germany is also abundantly confirmed in the second volume of the papers of Robert Lansing, secretary to President Woodrow Wilson. Even after the defeat of Germany, when the Allies occupied the Rhineland because of the non-payment of reparations, Pope Pius XI made an official protest to the Allies. This was done at the suggestion of Msgr. Pacelli, now Pope Pius XII, whose official Catholic biographer, Kees van Hoek, says of him that he "has always been known for his strong German leanings."

### Pius XI Looks to Germany

Pope Pius XI, obsessed with fear of the ultra-liberal socialist movement springing up in Russia, felt even more keenly than his predecessors the need of alliance with the rich and reactionary militarists of Germany. He knew that they already had plans for the gradual overthrow of the new German republic. Moreover, he had

1. *The Kaiser's Memoirs*, by Wilhelm II, translated by Thomas B. Ybarra, p. 211.

## The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

Published every Thursday for the propagation of the Evangelical principles of the Protestant Reformation and in defence of the faith once for all delivered to the Saints.  
\$2.00 Per Year, Postpaid, to any address. 5c Per Single Copy.

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ideas of his own for a new form of reactionary government, known as the 'corporate state,' for which the German super-corporation called the *Farbenindustrie* showed marked enthusiasm.

The Vatican's interest in the restoration of German militarism was not that of a passive on-looker. It was in a position to help both in the field of diplomacy and that of militant action. The leader of the German armistice delegation at Versailles was Mathias Erzberger, ardent Catholic and imperialist, mentioned above. There was Catholic General Franz von Epp who used Catholic Bavaria to hide much of the post-war munitions that Erzberger had promised to destroy. There was General von Epp's adjutant, Captain Ernst Roehm, a Catholic, who kept alive in Bavaria a chain of illegal armies, eventually amounting to 800,000 men, who were held ready for the revolution and restoration, that eventually came through Hitler.

But the greatest preparation that could be made for the revolutionary re-establishment of militarism was the discrediting of the infant German republic. The Catholic *Center Party* had at all times a large say in the doings of the republic, and on many occasions its fate was in the hands of a Catholic chancellor. The best known of these was Heinrich Bruening, who ruled Germany during its most critical years before the accession of Hitler. Bruening was a monarchist at heart. He was put into office by the reactionary army politician, General von Schleicher, known in Germany as 'The Great Intriguer.' Oswald Dutch in *The Errant Diplomat* (p. 109) remarks that "Schleicher had brought Bruening to power in order to prepare through him a dictatorship..." During Bruening's régime the *Osthilfe* scandal occurred, pouring millions of dollars into the pockets of the Junker militarists and landowners of East Prussia. On the other hand, his deflationary schemes helped crush the middle classes and prepare the way for dictatorship, as did his non-democratic rule by an endless series of

emergency decrees. His basic international policy fitted in well with the plans of the militarists. It was to 'yes' the Versailles Treaty and the ex-Allies to death by promising to carry out their decrees, but to beg off 'just this time' by pleading for 'one more concession' on the grounds of poverty and the danger of falling victim to the Communist bogeyman. H. W. Blood-Ryan in his book, *Franz von Papen* (p. 115), records that Bruening promised that as soon as he had finished out-witting the Allies and had buried the Treaty of Versailles, "he could arrange for Hitler to succeed him in a few years' time." Heiden in his book *Der Fuehrer*\* (p. 426) remarks of the



Pope Pius XII

Bruening government: "From now on, with planned inactivity, the Reich government looked on as Hitler strengthened his private army and sent it swarming into every town and village."

While the Catholic-dominated government of Republican Germany shifted into government-by-decree and refused to reach any basic agreement with the strong liberal forces of the *Social Democrats*, the same as it did in Austria, the day of the Hitler revolution and dictatorship drew closer. Pope Pius XI meanwhile had not remained idle. He had perfected his plans for the 'corporate state,' had them carried into action in Italy and Austria and issued his political blueprint, *Quadragesimo Anno*, advocating abolition of parties and of trade unionism. But more than that, he had formed and organized *Catholic Action*, a system of hierarchic political control that centralized everything in his hands and made it possible for him to reach decisions with dictators over the heads of national Catholic societies and their local clergy. It was this newly acquired power that he later used for the overnight abolition of the powerful *Center*

2. I Paid Hitler, by Frita Thyssen, page 124.

\* Houghton Mifflin Co., 774 pages, \$2.00.

*Party* in Germany, once he decided that its work was done and that it was only an obstacle in the path of a dictatorship.

### Catholic Origin of "National Socialism"

Catholic soil is the homeland of Fascism, as recent history shows to be the case in Italy, Austria, Portugal, Spain and Poland.\* Of the states in Germany, Protestant and Catholic, it was only natural that Nazism should spring up in Bavaria, for, as Heiden remarks (p. 252), it is "an overwhelmingly Catholic state, governed by Catholic priests and Catholic organizations." There Nazism began and there it gathered the strength and support to become a national political force. The key

days the head of Hitler's spies and the founder of the infamous *Gestapo*, which he still commands. To-day he ranks next to Hitler in power.

Karl Haushofer, a Catholic professor of the University of Munich, is the originator of Geopolitics and creator of Hitler's plans for world conquest.

Joseph Goebbels, creator of Hitler's propaganda machine from the outset of the movement, lists himself in the German *Who's Who* as a Roman Catholic. Heiden (p. 285) says of him: "He had studied art and philosophy at six universities, had lived on a scholarship from the Catholic *Albertus Magnus Society* . . ."

Hermann Goering, a product of Bavarian stock with its Catholic social outlook, is not a Catholic. A former



Eucharistic Procession—the arrow points to von Papen.

men of its organization, from the very first day, were Catholics. Captain Ernst Roehm, founder of the *National Socialist German Workers' Party* that Hitler joined and took over, was a Roman Catholic. He organized and led the private army that bludgeoned a path for Hitler in later years.

The real brain-truster, manager, organizer and later parliamentary leader of Hitler's *National Socialist Party*, was Gregor Strasser, brother of a Roman Catholic priest.

Heinrich Himmler, a Catholic, listed as such in the latest available edition of 'Who's Who' (*Wer Ist's*), a fellow townsman of the Strassers, has been from early

dope fiend and hanger-on of Hitler, he became a powerful figure in Nazism only after Hitler attained power and made him Premier of Prussia.

The man without whom Hitler could not have formed an organization, much less attained political triumph, is Catholic Adolf Mueller, who was supported by the Catholic church while he printed, often at a loss, all of Hitler's propaganda, including *Mein Kampf* and the Nazi daily, *Voelkischer Beobachter*. Heiden (p. 500) says of him:

"He calmly replied to Hitler that the 'Voelkischer Beobachter' was ruining him, but luckily he was doing a good business in Catholic church notices. This printing order he owed to Cardinal Faulhaber, who more or less dominated Bavarian politics. Adolf Mueller, who often held Hitler's financial fate in his hands, was no National Socialist, but a member of the Catholic 'Bavarian People's Party' which ruled Bavaria."

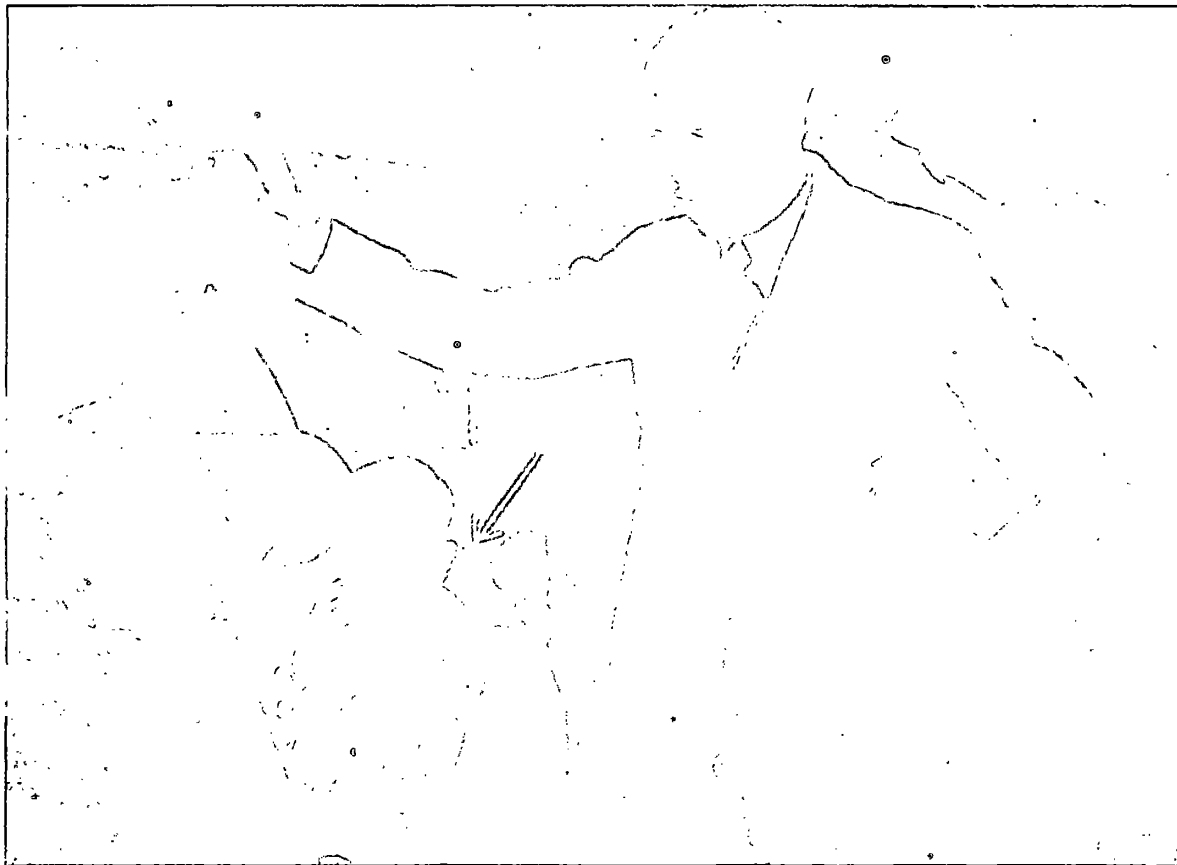
3. Concerning Poland Heiden (p. 896) says: "On the same day on which Poland made peace with National Socialist Germany, March 7, 1938, she ceased formally to be a democracy . . . A new constitution which abrogated equal and universal suffrage was . . . adopted within a few minutes." On page 709 he tells how Cardinal Hlond, virtual co-dictator of Poland, praised the German-Polish pact, "and said, exactly as Hitler had before him . . ."

For contacts with the German Military, Nazism had from the beginning Catholic General Franz von Epp, and later on Lt. General Kurt von Schleicher, who made Bruening chancellor of Germany. For contacts with rich industrialists in later years there was Catholic multi-millionaire Fritz Thyssen, fervent advocate of the 'corporate state,' who admits in his above-mentioned book that he gave Hitler 1,000,000 German marks. Thyssen later accepted from Goering appointment as a Prussian State Senator, as did Bishop Berning of Osnabrueck.

But of all the men in Germany, the one who did the most for Nazism financially and politically is Franz von Papen, a German military officer and a Vatican official with the title of Papal Chamberlain, which he received some years after he was expelled from the United States,

the religion itself influenced him. He states in *Mein Kampf* (p. 7) that his ideal was the dictatorial power of an abbot over his monks. His belief in miracles, in a divine vocation (such as his fellow Austrian, dictator Dollfuss, also confessed to), his monastic resignation to life without wife or family—all these and more can be attributed to the early influence on him of Catholicism in general and of Lambach monastery in particular where he attended school for a while. In *Mein Kampf* he expresses ardent admiration for the organization, power, intolerance and indestructibility of the Catholic church.\*

Political Catholicism also deeply influenced Hitler. In Vienna as a young man he admired and imitated the powerful Clerical leader, Dr. Karl Lueger, a violent anti-Semite, whom he mentions in *Mein Kampf*. From him



Hitler and von Papen in aeroplane.

during the First World War, as a spy and saboteur. Von Papen, a Catholic nobleman, was publisher of *Germania*, largest Catholic daily in Germany and organ of the Center Party. It is rightly said of von Papen in *Current Biography* (1941) on page 652 that "for years he has been the Pope's German voice."

#### Hitler's Catholicism

Hitler himself is the product of a Catholic country. Roman Catholic Austria with its feudal class consciousness, its strident anti-Semitism, its pan-German nationalism, its antic-clericalism not only bred Hitler but impressed its racial and religious conflicts deep into his soul. Not only these social products of Catholicism but

he learned not only the mass appeal of anti-Semitism but also the value of support from the powerful and well-entrenched church of Rome. Heiden (p. 63) says of Hitler's admiration for Lueger: "Young Hitler admired him greatly, handed out leaflets for his *Christian Social Party*, stood on street corners and made speeches."

Misinformed people are inclined to doubt Hitler's Catholicism because he is at times anti-clerical. They fail to realize that anti-clericalism is a distinctly Catholic frame of mind in Europe, but one that is found only in Catholic countries. This is what Catholic William Teeling means, when, for instance in *The Pope in Politics*,

\* *Mein Kampf*, definite and unexpurgated English edition published by Reynal and Hitchcock, pages 147, 149, 476, 487, 582.

he says (p. 201): "Other parts of Germany, like Bavaria, were so Catholic that anti-clericalism was rampant."

Hitler and General Ludendorff agreed on questions of nationalism and dictatorship, but quarreled and separated over Hitler's tie-up with Roman Catholicism. Heiden (p. 632) records that in the eyes of Ludendorff "one of the most dangerous agents of the Roman priesthood was Hitler himself. For it could not be denied that Hitler still belonged to the Catholic church . . . Hitler, who in 1918 certainly went to confession and communion, is even said later to have received the sacrament from the hands of this National Socialist abbot [Right Reverend Alban Schachleitner] . . . at all events, on July 1, 1933, he let it be officially proclaimed: '*Reich Chancellor Hitler still belongs to the Catholic Church and has no intention of leaving it.*'"

Hitler prominently lists himself each year on the opening page of the German *Who's Who* as a Roman Catholic. It should be noted that the Vatican not only has not excommunicated or censured him, but has never denied his Catholicity or uttered a word against him personally. On the contrary several of his most trusted co-workers have been given high papal honours since he established his dictatorship: Franz von Papen and Mihail Antonescu, puppet premier of Rumania, were given the highest papal honour, *The Grand Cross of the Order of Pope Pius*; Father Tiso, puppet President of Slovakia, was made a Right Reverend, Monsignor and Domestic Prelate of the Papal Household; the two Nazi officials who assisted von Papen at the signing of the Hitler-Vatican Concordat were made papal knights.

Hitler numbered priests and prelates among his personal friends. One of these, Father Bernard Stempf, member of a religious order, "*rewrote and edited Hitler's 'Mein Kampf,'*" according to Catholic Otto Strasser, former Nazi, in his book, *Hitler and I*. According to Heiden (p. 385), this same priest, "an anti-Semitic journalist and a political conspirer," saved Hitler's career by buying back for him a letter that disclosed a pathological sex scandal with his niece, Geli Raubal, with whom he had become involved.

When his friend, Abbot Schachleitner, died, he was given a State funeral by special decree of Hitler.

#### Von Papen Establishes Hitler Dictatorship

In late 1932 Hitler was at his wits' end. His *National Socialist Party* was losing popularity and votes, and was on the verge of collapse. Professor F. L. Schuman of Chicago University in his book, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (p. 188), describes Hitler's situation as follows:

"His situation seemed desperate: huge debts unpaid, no money available, Strasser in revolt, disaffection in the ranks . . . Then—von Papen to the rescue. On January 4, 1933, Hitler and von Papen, on the latter's invitation, held a 'love-feast' in Cologne in the home of Baron von Schroeder, friend of Fritz Thyssen."

On this occasion von Papen secured 8,000,000 marks (approximately \$2,000,000) for Hitler and promised him as much more money as would be needed to put him in power.

Von Papen, friend and confidant of President von Hindenburg, used his influence to remove every obstacle from Hitler's path. The ban against Hitler's private army was lifted, and the legislature was dissolved to make room for a new election campaign where Hitler

could lavish his newly acquired funds. The election returns of March 5, 1933, gave Hitler an increase of 4,000,000 votes and elected 340 members of his party to the legislature, a clear majority. According to Blood-Ryan (p. 203) and other authorities, this rapid increase in Hitler's voting strength can be accounted for only by the switch of Catholic votes.

Von Papen's next move was to persuade President von Hindenburg to make Hitler the Chancellor. Hindenburg was unwilling, but von Papen succeeded in convincing him by spreading false rumours about a plot against him on the part of the present Chancellor, General Kurt von Schleicher. To allay Hindenburg's misgivings in regard to Hitler and to clinch the agreement, von Papen agreed to serve as Vice-Chancellor under Hitler.

After Hitler became Chancellor of the German government, "in every part of the Reich, von Papen was to be heard exhorting the faithful to blind obedience to Adolf Hitler," Blood-Ryan remarks (p. 191).

But even after Hitler became Chancellor and was in a position to impose a dictatorship by force, he could not have done so *legally*, had the Catholic members of the *Center Party* voted against him or remained absent from the legislature. Heiden (pp. 576-8) describes how the *Center Party* voted in favour of the law that established a legal Nazi dictatorship by an overwhelming majority.

#### The Tie-up of Hitler and the Vatican

The Vatican foreign policy has had in recent centuries two major aims: destruction of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, condemned by Pope Innocent X because it established religious and political liberty in Europe on the basis of international law; second, re-establishment of the Holy Roman Empire. Hitler agreed with these objectives as the goal of Nazism. The *Fremdenblatt* of Hamburg, under control of Goebbels, on May 15, 1940, at the height of Nazi triumph, declared:

"It is not the revision of the Versailles Treaty which is the thought written on the banner of the German troops, but the extinguishing of the last remnants of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648."

Reporting a speech of Jesuit Father Edmund A. Walsh of Georgetown University, the *N. Y. Times* of February 17, 1940, said:

"Dr. Walsh said he had heard Adolf Hitler say that the Holy Roman Empire, which was a Germanic Empire, must be re-established."

In view of these common aims of Hitler and the Vatican and a mutual determination to use the 'Red Menace' as a smoke-screen, a Concordat between them, once Hitler attained power, was a mere matter of course. As soon as Hitler became dictator, preliminary arrangements for it were undertaken at once. It was signed by representatives of both parties in the Vatican on July 8, 1933. Heiden (pp. 634, 652) draws attention to two points of particular importance regarding the Concordat: First, Msgr. Kaas, head of the *Center Party*, now resident in the Vatican as adviser on German politics, strongly urged the Concordat with Hitler, which he helped draft; second, this was the first important foreign treaty of the Hitler government and its successful completion encouraged appeasement in Europe, as instanced in an editorial of

5. *Munich Playground*, by Ernest R. Pope, p. 79.

6. *Road to Disaster*, by Ernst Klein, page 271, describes this unscrupulous betrayal of von Schleicher and Hindenburg.

Britain's semi-official London *Times* on the day the Concordat was signed.

The Concordat, among other things, abolished the *Center Party*, gave Hitler the right to accept or reject all candidates for German bishoprics, and obligated all bishops to take an oath of loyalty to the German Reich and its (Hitler) government.

Of the Concordat Blood-Ryan (p. 221) says:

"Thus a weapon had been forged against the Lutheran Church in Prussia, and the Catholic Church had won a great victory over Protestantism in German-speaking lands. . . ."

Tibor Koeves, in his biography of Franz von Papen, *Satan in Top Hat*, (p. 215) says:

"The Concordat was a great victory for Hitler. It gave him the first moral support he received from the outer world, and this from the most exalted source. . . . Upon von Papen was conferred the highest papal decoration and . . . the man who caused the downfall of Bruening was now feted as Defender of the Faith."

The Vatican saw in Nazi-Fascism its big opportunity to regain the domination lost through the Reformation. It was determined that nothing must prevent the tie-up with Hitler's military dictatorship. It is not as if the Vatican did not know what it was doing. *Pope Pius XII*, as *Cardinal Pacelli* and *papal Secretary of State*, signed the Concordat shortly after completing a 12-year stay in Germany, where he learned at first hand everything to be known about Hitler, von Papen, Nazism and German politics in general. Viscount d'Abernon, former British ambassador to Germany, writes in his *Memoirs* that Pacelli was "the best informed man in the Reich." Six weeks after the new anti-Catholic Sterilization bill was published in Germany, the Concordat with Hitler was ratified, as Catholic William Teeling is forced to admit in *Crisis for Christianity* (p. 130). This shows that no mere matter of church dogma or moral principles was to be allowed to stand in the way of the political success of the church.

H. W. Blood-Ryan (p. 223) informs us that in the Vatican Concordat with Hitler there is "a secret clause, the contents of which it apparently suits neither party to deny or divulge." Teeling, a confidant of both Cardinal Pacelli and von Papen, also confesses in the book just mentioned above (p. 128) to the existence of this secret clause.

Catholicism did not at any time criticize Nazism because of its intolerance or other Fascist principles. An oversight on the part of Hitler incurred a moderate condemnation before Hitler attained power; it was the publication by the Nazi press of Alfred Rosenberg's anti-Christian book, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Hitler, lazy and erratic, had not bothered to read Rosenberg's manuscript before granting him permission to publish it, assuming that it was not anti-Catholic. Heiden (p. 365) correctly states that the church condemnation "might have been avoided if in the course of a year Hitler had taken a look into Rosenberg's manuscript." After Hitler was in power, a joint session of bishops at Fulda on March 23, 1933, withdrew all criticism and reproof of Nazism. In regard to this about-face of the Catholic church, Heiden (p. 633) makes this remark:

"The prohibitions and warnings had been issued while National Socialists were merely marching through the

streets and issuing threats; they were withdrawn when thousands were murdered or beaten to a pulp in concentration camps."

Pope Pius XI's passing declaration against the abuses of Nazism, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, was "a protest and no more," as Catholic William Teeling regretfully admits. In the game of power politics such wordy declamations are often made 'for the sake of the record,' especially among the Italian rulers of the Vatican who are known for their love of bombast. It is obvious that if Hitler were really persecuting the church, the Vatican would have had nothing to lose by denouncing its Concordat; it could even have declared an interdict against Germany, as it did against the liberal government of Mexico in 1926. As after-events proved, the outburst of temperamental Pius XI against Nazism meant no more than his similar denunciation against Mussolini's Fascism a few years before. Much as the papacy likes strong dictatorial governments similar to its own, it is very jealous for fear that in such régimes the state may become more powerful than the church.

What mild and occasional criticisms were expressed by this or that German bishop in later years against the excesses of Nazi bureaucrats were not against Hitler, nor were the pro-monarchist prelates who pronounced them, like Count-Bishop von Galen, fighting for democracy, which they detest. They were merely appealing to Hitler over the heads of officious subordinates who trespassed on the special privileges which he had granted to the Catholic church. The Catholic attitude could not be better expressed than it was by Cardinal Faulhaber himself, when he said:

"We are fighting for our rights within the Nazi régime and not against it."

7. Quoted by Father Coughlin in *Social Justice* of April 3, 1939.

## A GREAT ARTICLE FROM THE CONVERTED CATHOLIC

THE GOSPEL WITNESS, in season and out of season, has urged its readers to subscribe to *The Converted Catholic Magazine*, edited by former Roman Catholic priests. It is published in New York, and may be ordered from: Christ Mission, 229 West 28th St., New York 19, N.Y. The Editor-in-Chief is Dr. L. H. Lehmann; Associate-Editor is Dr. J. J. Murphy; and Contributing Editors: Rev. A. Caliendo, M.A., Rev. Francis Guglielmi, D.D., Rev. A. Malinverni, D.D., and Rev. P. J. Whelan. Its subscription price in Canada is \$1.25 plus exchange; but we suggest to all our readers that they subscribe to it, and send \$2.00. Anything over the cost may well go to the fund of *The Converted Catholic Magazine*.

We say this because we never read a copy of *The Converted Catholic Magazine* without wanting to reproduce every word of it, from the first word to the last. And now in this issue, there is a great article entitled, "How the Catholic Church Helped Hitler to Power." In confirmation of that thesis we have repeatedly quoted *The Converted Catholic*, as well as a number of the authors cited by Dr. Murphy. But here, without having obtained Dr. Murphy's permission, but assuming that he and Dr. Lehmann would readily grant our use of the article as an

(Continued on page 13)